

THE NEW YORK TIMES
16 May 1977

Senate Intelligence Unit Weighs Single Director for All Agencies

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, May 15—The Senate Intelligence Committee, after a year of activity that has been almost as secret as the agencies it monitors, is considering a plan to concentrate the authority over all the nation's intelligence agencies in a single office known as a "director of national intelligence."

In the past, the head of the Central Intelligence Agency also has carried the title of Director of Central Intelligence but has lacked meaningful control over large segments of the intelligence community, particularly the National Security Agency and other groups in the Department of Defense.

Senior senators on the committee, which is ready to begin a series of hearings and issue recommendations and reports that could reshape the intelligence community and set the pattern of Congressional overseeing for years to come, said that the committee believed the new director of national intelligence should have control of the National Security Agency and its worldwide activities in communications interception and code breaking.

"We'd have to give him the tools he'd need to run the entire operation, and that includes budget authority" and the authority to set priorities, said Senator Wal-

ter (Dee) Huddleston, Democrat of Kentucky. "We can't place the responsibility on him without giving him the authority."

In the months ahead, the committee plans to hold hearings on secrecy and espionage laws, report on the quality of intelligence gathering about China and the Soviet Union, draft a new legislative charter for the Central Intelligence Agency and disclose a lump-sum figure for the cost of intelligence.

"We are going to propose an in-depth and massive restructuring of our laws," Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Democrat of Hawaii, the committee chairman, said recently.

"Unfortunately, most of our work is classified and can't be discussed publicly," he added. "But in a short time, we have made much history, and I think every indication is that we will be able to do what we need to carry out our oversight responsibility."

Report on Anniversary

The committee, which was created after a select committee headed by Senator Frank Church, Democrat of Idaho, documented scores of improper and illegal acts by the nation's intelligence community, will mark its anniversary on Thursday with a report to the Senate reviewing the panel's first year. The report is expected to be general in nature and not to discuss in detail the covert operations that the committee has examined or the allegations it has investigated. But it is expected to contain a strong statement by the subcommittee on rights of Americans. Senator Birch Bayh, Democrat of Indiana, who headed the subcommittee, pledged that the committee would "establish the rule of law in intelligence activities and law enforcement." In a series of interviews last week, Senator Inouye and the chairmen of his six subcommittees insisted that the intelligence agencies had cooperated well to date and that the experience of the first year suggested that serious Congressional oversight of the intelligence community was possible.

They indicated that they had come to agree that the intelligence agencies were vital, that there were legitimate national security secrets to be kept and that there were important national security operations to be conducted.

But they also agreed that major decisions and debates regarding the intelligence community lay ahead and that the coming year could be crucial in determining the future of Congressional oversight.

Wants to Codify Rights

"We have the capability, but the question is whether we will write the laws tight enough," said Senator Joseph R. Biden Jr., Democrat of Delaware. "If we don't codify the rights of Americans and if we don't define in law just what the [intelligence agencies] can and can't do the ball game is over as far as oversight is concerned."

The man who will play a key role in this is Senator Walter D. Huddleston, Democrat of Kentucky, who heads the subcommittee that will draft a new charter for the Central Intelligence Agency. The Carter Administration has endorsed the idea of a legislative charter, as opposed to the current one, which is based on executive orders and can be changed at the whim of any incumbent President. But debates are expected to develop over just how tightly the charter should be drawn.

In general, the intelligence community would prefer only broad guidelines, while some of the critics of past abuses argue that the charter should contain the specific recommendations of the Church committee, which were designed to control covert operations abroad and to place tight restrictions on domestic political spying at home.

"We would be inclined to be very specific," Senator Huddleston said. "But it is natural that the executive branch would like to be as flexible as possible."

Military intelligence sources said today that any attempt to shift control of N. S. A. away from the Defense Department would probably encounter resistance at the Pentagon, which would contend that it could not obtain the tactical intelligence it needs if the agency were reoriented toward a "national intelligence" mission.

But several committee members said that there was some support for reshaping the entire intelligence operation to give less emphasis to tactical intelligence and more to national intelligence vital to foreign policy and economic policy.

'Whole New Concept' Needed

While not denying the military's need for good tactical intelligence, Senator Adlai E. Stevenson 3d, Democrat of Illinois, suggested that there might be a need for "a whole new concept of national security," which has remained unchanged for years because of habit, inertia and the predominance of the military component.